

“Doormat”

Acceptance didn't come to me quickly or gently. In the beginning, it felt like a word people tossed around in meetings, something everyone else seemed to understand while I sat there wondering why it felt so impossible. I thought it was letting other people win. They aren't going to push me around and treat me like I am less than them. How dare they assume I am soft, that I like being stepped on, like being pushed around. Why do people treat me so unfairly?

Before sobriety I thought acceptance meant letting people walk all over me. I thought I needed to fight back and let these people know I am angry and I am NOT your doormat. Then when I got sober I thought it meant swallowing my feelings, staying quiet, and pretending everything was fine. I thought it meant being the victim because I didn't know how to stand up without feeling guilty. Why do I keep hearing Acceptance is the answer? These sober people think they know the answers but they don't.

I spent so much time believing other people were doing things *to* me. Every comment felt personal. Every action felt intentional. Every silence felt like rejection. I was convinced people were talking about me, judging me, using me, or ignoring me on purpose. I didn't understand why they couldn't see how much their behavior hurt. I didn't understand why they didn't treat me with the care I desperately needed and wanted. Didn't they know I am a human being with feelings?

Recovery forced me to look at myself in ways I never had before. It made me question the stories I had been telling myself for years. It made me face the truth that I wasn't just being used. I was also giving people permission to treat me in ways that didn't honor me and I was doing the same, if not worse, in return. Not because I was weak, but because I didn't know any other way to exist. I didn't know how to say no. I didn't know how to set boundaries. I didn't know how to believe I deserved better.

The shift didn't happen overnight. It came slowly, in small realizations that felt like tiny earthquakes under my feet. One of the biggest was this: most people aren't thinking about me at all. They aren't plotting against me. They aren't waking up with a plan to hurt me. They aren't analyzing my every move. They're just living their lives being self-consumed, distracted, overwhelmed, focused on their own struggles, their own insecurities, their own chaos.

It wasn't a personal attack. It wasn't about me. It wasn't even directed at me.

Accepting that truth was both painful and freeing. Painful because it meant I had spent years carrying weight that didn't belong to me. Freeing because it meant I could finally put it down.

Acceptance became something different — not surrender, not defeat, not silence. It became clarity. It became understanding. It became the ability to let people be who they are without making their behavior a reflection of my worth. It became the strength to say, "I can't control other people's actions or words, but I can control how I respond." It became the peace that comes from stepping out of the center of every story and realizing the world isn't aimed at me.

I learned that acceptance doesn't make me a doormat. It makes me grounded. It makes me steady. It makes me free.

And with that freedom came peace — real peace, the kind that settles into your bones. The kind that lets you breathe without bracing for impact. The kind that lets you walk through life without feeling like you're constantly defending yourself. The kind that lets you say, "This is not about me," and mean it.

Acceptance didn't make me smaller. It made me stronger. It gave me back my life. And now, instead of lying on the ground waiting for someone to step on me, I stand tall — knowing who I am, knowing what I deserve, and knowing that peace comes from letting go of what was never mine to carry.